

details have caused too many families to bury the next generation. And for all our children's sake, this Nation must reclaim our neighborhoods and our streets.

We need a national strategy to assure that every community is attacking gun violence with focus and intensity. I'm here today to announce a national initiative to help cities like Philadelphia fight gun violence. The program I propose, we call Project Safe Neighborhoods, will establish a network of law enforcement and community initiatives targeted at gun violence. It will involve an unprecedented partnership between all levels of government. It will increase accountability within our systems. And it will send an unmistakable message: If you use a gun illegally, you will do hard time.

This Nation must enforce the gun laws which exist on the books. Project Safe Neighborhoods incorporates and builds upon the success of existing programs. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, during the first year of what's called Project Exile, homicides were reduced by 40 percent and armed robberies were reduced by 30 percent, in the first year alone. And thanks to Boston's Operation Cease Fire, in almost 2 years, no one under the age of 17 was shot. These are tremendous success stories, and ones that are worth duplicating around our Nation.

My administration is proposing to devote more than \$550 million on Project Safe Neighborhoods over the next 2 years. The funding will be used to hire new Federal and State prosecutors, to support investigators, to provide training, and develop and promote community outreach efforts. All newly appointed United States attorneys will be directed to certify to the Attorney General that the new comprehensive gun violence program has been implemented in their districts. We're going to reduce gun violence in America, and those who commit crimes with guns will find a determined adversary in my administration.

Domestic tranquility is a phrase made famous in this city. Project Safe Neighborhoods is one step, and an important step, to making that a reality. And now to explain the program is a fine American, a great Attorney General, John Ashcroft.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John F. Street of Philadelphia; and Gov. Tom Ridge, Lt. Gov. Mark S. Schweiker, and Attorney General Mike Fisher of Pennsylvania.

Remarks Honoring the 2000 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Houston Comets

May 14, 2001

Well, thank you all for coming. It's my honor to welcome the first Texas team to the White House since I've been fortunate enough to be the President. It seems like it's becoming quite a habit.

Thank you very much, Nancy, for coming. It's my honor to welcome two Texas Congressmen: Ken Bentsen and John Culberson. We welcome you all here, as well. I understand that Val Ackerman is here, and I want to congratulate you for your vision; a true sports entrepreneur who has really put the effort and energy to make the WNBA the success it has been. America owes you a debt of gratitude, particularly a dad of twins owes you a debt of gratitude—women twins.

I want to thank the coach for coming, as well. It turns out every single championship team that comes to the White House has got a lot of ingredients, but one is a coach that is really good at what he does. So Mr. Coach, congratulations on returning, and I suspect I'll see you here next year.

I love the idea of women's—of heralding women's athletics. And one of the great things about the Comets is that you've proven that you're some of the greatest athletes in the world, but also some of the greatest people in the world. I had the honor of living in the State of Texas when Sheryl was playing for Texas Tech. And I remember how proud we were—and I also remember—when you won the national championship. But I also remember watching you and Cynthia Cooper and other stars, when it comes to character, perform your acts of kindness in our communities around the State of Texas.

I think the WNBA also is—not only showcases athletic talent but it attracts a lot of young fans to see their stars perform. And

so I want to thank our young fans who are here today.

I'm also mindful that those of us in positions of responsibility must uphold the responsibility with dignity and class. And this franchise has done that. I know your hard work in the Houston area when it comes to helping people who may have cancer. I know of your work in the neighborhoods around Houston, by putting on clinics to teach young men and women what it means to have clean minds and clean bodies. And for that, I'm grateful. And for that, I welcome you to the White House and congratulate you on being true champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Alexander, wife of Houston Comets owner Leslie Alexander; Val Ackerman, president, Women's National Basketball Association; and coach Van Chancellor, player Sheryl Swoopes, WNBA 2000 Player of the Year, and retired player Cynthia Cooper, Houston Comets.

Remarks at the Peace Officers' Memorial Service

May 15, 2001

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Gil, thank you very much for your friendship and your eloquence. It's my honor to be here. I'm pleased to be joined by three fine members of my Cabinet: General Ashcroft and Secretary O'Neill and Secretary Chao—I thank you all for joining us. I appreciate the Members of the United States Congress being here. Thank you for letting us share these beautiful grounds.

I'm so thankful for the beautiful voices that are here today. Officer Rodriguez, I've heard a lot of national anthems in my day, that was one of the greatest. Thank you very much, sir. Not bad for a New York cop. *[Laughter]* And Billy, thank you very much for sharing your God-given talents with us, as well.

It is an honor to welcome you all here on these beautiful grounds, and it's a honor to be among the people in law enforcement who are here today. And it's a special privilege to be able to say hello and God bless to the many widows and family members of the fallen officers. It's truly my privilege.

As President, I feel a special connection with the officers of the law. I meet many of you as I travel around our country, and of course, on a daily basis I'm surrounded by some of the finest men and women I have ever met in my life.

The same is true for all Americans but in a less visible way. Everywhere, from the greatest city to the quietest of crossroads in America, there is someone working long, hard hours to protect our citizens; someone who, when we're in trouble, will face a threat in our defense; someone who, when we are in danger, will rush to our aid, even in complete disregard to his or her own safety.

One of the names recorded on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial is that of Patrolman Mickey Cullinane of Sea Island City, New Jersey. He died trying to rescue a man lying at the bottom of a deep pit. A witness described the obvious dangers at the scene. He recalled everybody said, "You can't go down there." But some people can't see someone in trouble and walk away. Mickey did—he didn't walk away. He did what the courageous do.

In the daily lives of Americans, such moments of emergency are rare, thankfully rare. For most, the violent moments never come at all. And there's a reason for this, and it's simply not good fortune. The reason is, you, the officers of the law, your bravery, and the courage you show every day in wearing the uniform. And it's always been that way.

Every generation of Americans has produced men and women willing to stand watch over the rest of us. Every generation has lived under your protection. And we must never take for granted the police officers of America.

We have a solemn obligation to give thanks and credit to law enforcement officers who are no longer with us. We honor, as well, the ones who have so bravely faced injury and disability. And we're so grateful to those who have retired after honorable careers and, of course, to those who are on the job this very day.

At times, law enforcement must seem like the most thankless work you could ever do. But I'm here to tell you that yours is one of the great callings, and your country thanks you for it.